A Political Biography of Tamil Nationalist Poet

Pavalareru Perunjchiththiranar

(Tamil Nadu Politics)

Thanjai Nalankilli

A Political Biography of Tamil Nationalist Poet Pavalareru Perunjchiththiranar

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by

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Abbreviations

AIADMK - All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
DK - Dravida Kazhagam
DMK - Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
LTTE - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MDMK - Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
MGRADMK - MGR Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
PMK - Pattali Makkal Katchi
TMC - Tamil Maanila Congress
TNCC - Tamil Nadu Congress Committee
TNM - Tamil National Movement (Tamilar Thesiya Iyakkam)
TPMK - Tamil Pattali Makkal Katchi

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Foreword

Tamil nationalist poet Perunjchiththiranar (1933 - 1995) was never a member of a Dravidian party but he worked tirelessly for some of the early Dravidian party ideals. He was a friend and follower of DK founder Periyar E. V. Ramaswamy. His funeral was attended by many Dravidian party leaders. The then DMK President M.Karunanidhi spoke at the memorial service. Tamil Nadu State legislative assembly passed a condolence resolution moved by Finance Minister Nedunchezhian of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa's AIADMK government.

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1. Introduction

On June 11, 1995, former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK President M. Karunanidhi was in Madurai attending party business. One of his aides informed him that Mr. Perunchiththiranar had passed away that morning in Chennai. Perunchiththiranar was not a party member or leader, not a family member or a close friend. Still Karunanidhi asked his aide to make arrangements for his immediate return to Chennai to pay him his last respects. Who is this Perunchiththiranar who commanded such respect from one of the most popular and busiest political leaders of Tamil Nadu?

Perunchiththiranar's body was laid to rest on June 16. Those who came to pay homage to him during those 5 days read like the "**Who is Who?**" of the top hierarchy of Tamil Nadu politics. They included heads of DK, DMK, PMK and MDMK. Many other political leaders, noted Tamil scholars and leaders of many Tamil organizations also came to pay their respects. There were unconfirmed reports that Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leader Prabaharan sent two of his aides from Jaffna into Tamil Nadu clandestinely as his personal emissaries to pay his last respect (LTTE was a banned organization in India).

Several thousand people from all over Tamil Nadu and some from outside of Tamil Nadu came for the funeral procession on June 16. Minister Nedunchezhian of Jayalalitha's AIADMK government in Tamil Nadu moved and passed a condolence message in the Tamil Nadu legislative assembly.

Perunchiththiranar has the dubious honor of being jailed under Congress, DMK and AIADMK governments of Tamil Nadu.

Do you know who this Perunchiththiranar is and what his contributions to the Tamil people are?

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2. A Brief Biography

Perunchiththiranar was born on March 10, 1933 in Salem City, Tamil Nadu to Mr. R. Duraiswamy and Mrs. Kunjammal Duraiswamy. His given name was Manickam. His father was a police constable. He wrote Tamil poems from his school days. He was an excellent poet, later earning even the appreciation and applause of Bharathidasan. He wrote poems to his last days, even from his sick bed about the very last illness that took him away from his beloved Tamil people. In addition to his given name Manickam, he also wrote under several pen names; the one that stuck with him as he got established as an ardent Tamil Nationalist and freedom fighter was "Perunchiththiranar". He was also known as Pavalareru (lion among poets) in his later years.

He studied up to the intermediate level (2 years of college after high school) at Salem College. Then he worked for the Indian Government from 1952 to 1967. After 1967, he spent his full time publishing three magazines, writing books and lecturing around Tamil Nadu (he also went on lecture tours to Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Andaman-Nicobars, England, France, Germany and Switzerland). He married Miss Kamalam (she changed the name later to Thamarai) in 1950. He had 4 daughters and 2 sons. The youngest son Pozhilan was arrested and convicted (along with Arivazhagan, Ilango and Muhilan) for allegedly bombing a TV Relay Station (allegedly because it is a tool for Hindi imposition) and a statue of the first Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (allegedly because it is a symbol of Indian rule over Tamil Nadu). I believe that he and the three others convicted in the case were released on bail and the guilty verdict is under appeal.

Perunchiththiranar himself was imprisoned 8 times, spending a total of about 27 months in jail, for his various activities relating to Tamil and social reform (Thenmozhi, July 1995; Volume 27: Number 9; page 9). [Some web sites indicate that he was jailed more than 8 times; they may be including the times he was arrested and then released within a few hours]. He has the dubious honour of being imprisoned by Congress, DMK and AIADMK governments of Tamil Nadu as well as when Tamil Nadu was under governor's rule.

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3. Overview of Perunjchiththiranar's Service to Tamil

It can be said that Perunchiththiranar served the Tamil people and the Tamil language in every way he could. We provide a brief overview of his service to Tamil.

1. Social reform in Tamil Nadu, including eradication of irrational religious beliefs and superstitions, eradication of the caste system, and ending the hegemony of Brahminism. He spent one month in jail for burning Manu Shastra, which preached caste based "justice system". (Unlike the great social reformer of our time, Periyar E. V. Ramaswamy, Perunchiththiranar believed in one God.)

2. Freedom for Tamil Eelam. He supported the liberation of Tamil Eelam from the very beginning and continued with his support until his death. He was imprisoned twice after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi because of his continued support for Tamil Eelam; he spent a total of eight-and-a-half months for this.

3. Preserving the purity of Tamil by eliminating all foreign words (Sanskrit, English, etc.) in written and spoken Tamil.

4. Efforts to make Tamil the language of instruction and the language of governance (official language) in Tamil Nadu. His last public speech on April 25, 1995 was at a march in support of making Tamil the language of instruction and governance, organized by the Capital City Tamil Association. The marchers were briefly detained at the police station for violating prohibitory orders, and there he spoke to the marchers.

5. Opposition to Hindi imposition. His first arrest and imprisonment (for two months) was for writing an editorial in support of the 1965 anti-Hindi imposition agitation.

6. Efforts to help impoverished Tamil scholars financially. Perunjsiththiranar was not a wealthy man, so he used his magazines to solicit funds from readers and gave every cent to those scholars. Those he thus helped include Bharathidasan's family (after his death), Ezhaththu Adigal family (after his death), Muthu Kumaraswamy family (after his death), Appathuraiyar family (after his death) and Devaneya Pavanar (during his lifetime). Recently Tamil Nadu government nationalized the books of Bharathidasan, Appathuraiyar and Deveneya Pavanar and gave sizable monies to their families but the same government refused to help them in the 1960's and 1970's when they were suffering. It was Perunchiththiranar who came forward and gave a helping hand to these great Tamil scholars and their families. This goes to show his generosity, empathy and respect for these scholars.

7. Perunchiththiranar was a Tamil scholar in his own right. He published more than 30 books. They include anthology of his poems as well as collection of his articles. Many of his poems are comparable in style and depth to the Kazhagam (Sangam) era poems like Purananooru and Ahananooru. Two of his books have been used as texts in Tamil Nadu universities. At least one doctoral thesis and half a dozen master's theses have been written analyzing his poems. He is truly one of the greatest Tamil poets of the 20th

century along with Bharathi and Bharathidasan. (A distinction has to be made between Bharathi and the other two; Bharathidasan and Perunchiththiranar were Tamil nationalists and Bharathi was not).

8. Freedom for Tamil Nadu from Indian rule.

Each one of these services may be discussed in detail but we will leave that to his biographers. We will limit our discussion here to the last item, namely, his fight for independence for Tamil Nadu from Indian rule, because I consider it to be his unique and primary contribution to the Tamil people.

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4. Perunchiththiranar and Independence for Tamil Nadu

Perunchiththiranar was not the first one to raise his voice for an independent Tamil Nadu but he was the only one among "popularly known personalities" to work relentlessly towards this goal until his death. Dravida Kazhagam (DK) founder E. V. Ramaswamy (popularly known as Periyar or EVR) and his disciple and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) founder C. N. Annadurai (popularly known as Anna) did demand independence for Tamil Nadu. In fact, Annadurai's DMK won sizable number of seats in the Tamil Nadu state assembly in the 1962 elections on the "independence" platform. Fearing this electoral approval for independence, the Indian government under the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru passed a law the next year (in 1963) prohibiting parties and persons demanding independence for states from contesting elections. Annadurai immediately gave up his independence demand. As for Periyar, he did stick with the independence demand until his death. His newspaper "Viduthalai" (Independence) did publish a slogan for independent Tamil Nadu in every issue in his later years, but he did very little else for it; his long public service spanning several decades was concentrated on social reforms, especially breaking the stronghold of Brahminism over the Tamil society. Unlike Annadurai, Perunchiththiranar never gave up his demand for independent Tamil Nadu in spite of threats and bribes from the Indian government. Unlike Periyar, Perunchiththiranar considered his fight for independence to be his prime work for the people of Tamil Nadu, although he did work for the Tamil people in other areas also as we listed in Section 3.

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5. Perunchiththiranar and Sikh Freedom Fighter Bhinderwale

Perunchiththiranar's demand and fight for an independent Tamil Nadu reached the leaders of other nationalities fighting for the freedom of their own people from Indian rule. One among them was the great Sikh freedom fighter Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. During the early 1980s, he sent two of his representatives to Perunchithiranar. The Sikh freedom fighters invited him to visit Punjab and give a series of speeches at various places in support of Khalistan. Perunchithiranar agreed. He was eager to visit Punjab and establish a liaison between Sikhs and Tamils. But, before the tour materialized, the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sent the India army into the holiest of Sikh shrines, the Golden Temple, and killed Bhinderwalle and many other freedom fighters. Perunchiththiranar's tour of Punjab in support of Khalistan never took place.

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6. Perunchiththiranar and Armed Freedom Fighters of Tamil Nadu

Though Perunchiththiranar never took a gun in his hand and his only weapons were his pen and a microphone, the Indian government feared him. The Indian government knew that his words could create new of Tamil nationalists (and they did), some of whom could create liberation armies of armed cadres. Though we do not know whether his words inspired the likes of Tamilarasan (founder of Tamil Nadu Viduthalai Padai [Tamil Nadu Liberation Army]) and Rajaraman (founder of Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Padai [Tamil People's Liberation Army]), the Indian government is extremely fearful of the emergence of such armed freedom fighters in its southern flank. Indian security forces spent enormous manpower to crush the Tamil Nadu Viduthalai Padai [Tamil Nadu Liberation Army] and the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Padai [Tamil People's Liberation Army]. Though Tamilarasan was killed and his successor Ilavarasan was in jail for a while, Tamil Nadu Viduthalai Padai is still active under a new leader whose name is not known. To my knowledge Perunchiththiranar did not have any contact with these groups but he was truly proud of them.

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7. Perunchiththiranar's Commitment to Independent Tamil Nadu

Perunchiththiranar's commitment to independent Tamil Nadu was unswerving and constant. Every issue of his monthly magazine contained the following **slogan on the top of page one**.

"Every Tamil should realize that independence for Tamil Nadu should be our very breath, our goal, our policy and our wholehearted effort"("Thamizhaga viduthalai than nam muzhu moochu, noakkam, kolkai, muyarchi endu Tamizharkal ov-vorvarum vunarthal vaendum")

In 1972 he organized the first "**Tamil Nadu Freedom Conference**". I am not a lawyer but I think that talking or writing about independence for Tamil Nadu is not illegal as such because of the guarantee of freedom of speech (check with a lawyer). So the government's tactic was to issue a prohibitory order against the meeting saying that it would "disturb the peace". People, however, attended the conference in spite of the prohibitory order. Perunchiththiranar and some others were arrested for violating the order and he spent a week in jail. He organized similar conferences in 1973 and 1974 also. He participated in the "Tamil Nadu National Self-Determination Conference" organized by the Tamil National Movement (TNM) (Tamil Desiya Iyakkam) President P. Nedumaran in Thanjai in 1990.

In addition to these conferences, he had spoken at hundreds of meetings around Tamil Nadu as well as in Singapore and Malaysia (71 speeches), in Sri Lanka (17 speeches), in Andaman Nicobars (13 speeches) and in Europe (England, France, Germany, Switzerland) (26 speeches). In virtually every meeting he spoke for the need for independence for Tamil Nadu from Indian rule. He believed that independence is the only solution to end the domination of Hindi people and politicians over Tamil Nadu. He believed, rightly so, that DMK and AIADMK governments in Tamil Nadu State cannot bring about the end of that domination.

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8. Headlines

His commitment for independent Tamil Nadu is reflected in his writings and speeches. Here are some headlines from his bimonthly magazine "Tamil Nilam (Tamil Land)" (defunct after his death):

"Freedom for Tamil Nadu should be the goal of all of us"

"Independent Tamil Nadu is the Only Solution"

"Tamil Race cannot progress without Independence for Tamil Nadu"

"Unite and speak Up for Tamil Nadu Independence"

"No one can stop the Emergence of Independent Tamil Nadu"

"No Future for the Tamil Race without Independence for Tamil Nadu"

"If Tamil Nadu Freedom Movement fails, Tamil Race will be Extinct in 500 Years"

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9. Perunchiththiranar's Following

Perunchiththiranar tried his best to instill a thirst for freedom in Tamil hearts and minds through his writings and speeches. He, indeed, succeeded in creating many thousands of Tamil nationalists working for independent Tamil Nadu, some quietly, some vocally, and possibly some with armed Tamil groups. I personally know that there are Tamil nationalists among professors, teachers, students, doctors, lawyers, engineers, soldiers, air force men, police, government employees, business men-women and movie actors (Perunchiththiranar may not be credited to everyone of them but surely he deserves credit for a majority of them). Many Tamil people do not recognize that Perunchiththiranar created a force and momentum that is sure to change the history of Tamil Nadu, and with it the history of the Indian subcontinent and South Asia. Many Tamils who do not know the extent of what he has created, ridicule him as one with no mass appeal; even they were surprised at the number of people who came to pay their final respects after his death. Surely he did not have the following of Annadurai or Karunanidhi or M.G. Ramachandran or Jayalalitha but it is Perunchiththiranar's work that would make a revolutionary change in Tamil history and not that of the DMK or AIADMK leaders. Their impact on Tamil Nadu history is minor compared to what Periyar did and what Perunchiththiranar did, the latter's impact will be felt in the coming several decades.

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10. Indian Attempts to Silence Perunchiththiranar

While most Tamils do not know the full extent of Perunchiththiranar's work and, especially, its potential impact on the future course of Tamil Nadu history and thus the history of the Indian subcontinent itself, there was one powerful organization that realized it. That organization was none other than the Government of India.

Of all the organizations and leaders in Tamil Nadu, the Indian government probably feared Perunchiththiranar the most because he demanded independence for Tamil Nadu stedfastedly for almost four decades. Perunchiththiranar's independence demand, if achieved, would end the cultural domination of Hindi and the economic benefits of Hindi regions because of the discriminatory economic policies of the Indian government in favour of Hindi states. The Indian Government, dominated and controlled by Hindi politicians, set out to silence Perunchiththiranar one way or other.

As we stated in Sections 7 and 8, Perunchiththiranar's main platform were his three magazines through which he propagated his demand for independence for Tamil Nadu. Police officers visited his editorial office, questioned him about his activities and threatened him that his writings were anti-national (anti-Indian). Perunchiththiranar was not one to be silenced easily. He continued to publish the magazines and continued write about the need for independence for Tamil Nadu in spite of further visits from police. Indian government could not shut down his magazines or silence him thus.

In the early to mid 1980s, when Rajiv Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India, the Indian government considered imprisoning Perunchiththiranar, alleging that he was a threat to national security (as it did with the "Lion of Kashmir", the late Sheikh Abdullah, in the 1960s when he raised his voice for independent Kashmir). But the Indian intelligence warned the government that any long-term imprisonment of Perunchiththiranar could result in Tamil nationalists turning to violence in retaliation. This would result in more publicity for the Tamil Nadu Independence Movement within India and abroad. So Rajiv Gandhi abandoned the idea.

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11. Perunchiththiranar and Rajiv Gandhi ("the bribe")

Having failed to silence Perunchiththiranar by threats, the Indian government tried an alternate plan. It took to heart the old proverb "you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar".

In 1985, the then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi sent his top confidante in Tamil Nadu, Mr. G. K. Moopanar, to Perunchiththiranar with a proposition. Moopanar met with Perunchiththiranar and told him that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi would like to meet with him personally. If Perunchiththiranar agrees to drop his demand for independence for Tamil Nadu, the Prime Minister was willing to grant him many "favors". Perunchiththiranar curtly told Moopanar that if what Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi wants from him is to stop his campaign for independent Tamil Nadu, he has no interest in meeting the Prime Minister.

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12. Indian Government's Fear of Tamil Nadu Independence Movement

The incidence of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's personal attempts to "bribe" Perunchiththiranar into silence speaks volumes. I often see messages in Internet Newsgroups by Tamils and others belittling Tamil Nadu Independence Movement. Make no mistake about it, Tamil Nadu Independence Movement is real, is multi-faceted, is underground to some extent, and is not the dream of a few "extremists". AS an avowed Tamil nationalist wedded to Tamil Nadu independence, I have met with several hundred Tamils who are for independence (of course the total number of such people are many thousands). They are in every walk of life including soldiers, air force men and police officers. Indian government recognizes that Tamil Nadu Independence Movement has the potential to cause severe problems to Hindi politicians' hegemony over Tamil Nadu and other non-Hindi regions. Indian government fears the emergence of a strong independence movement in its southern flank while it is trying hard to contain the various freedom fighters in the north and the east. That is why the Indian government makes every attempt to silence those who speak up for independent Tamil Nadu. The fact that Perunchiththiranar's campaign for independent Tamil Nadu reached all the way up to the personal attention of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and that he would personally attempt to "bribe" this Tamil nationalist leader to silence is evidence of how much the Hindi people and politicians fear Tamil Nadu Independence Movement.

Obviously Indian Government thinks that Independence for Tamil Nadu is possible. Why else would the Prime Minister of India want to meet with this relatively unknown Perunchiththiranar and ask him to stop his campaign for independent Tamil Nadu? Before Annadurai and Karunanidhi became Tamil Nadu Chief Ministers, no Indian Prime Minister wanted to meet with either to ask them to stop their campaign for autonomy for states. Why? Because Hindi politicians know that the demand for state autonomy is no threat to Hindi imperialism over the non-Hindi states. As long as Tamil Nadu is part of India, Hindi politicians who dominate and control the Indian government decide what powers the states may have irrespective of what Tamil Nadu wants. The Dravidian parties (DMK, AIADMK, MDMK) may and do include state autonomy demand in their election manifestos and even pass resolutions in the state assembly but the Hindi politicians turn a deaf ear to it! In fact the Tamil Nadu assembly did pass a resolution for state autonomy in April 1974 when Karunanidhi (DMK) was the Chief Minister. It is over quarter of a century now. During this time state governments have lost some powers to the Indian government and did not gain any additional powers. So much for autonomy demands and autonomy resolutions by the Tamil Nadu assembly elected by majority of the people of Tamil Nadu!

While Hindi politicians chuckle at Dravidian parties' demand for state autonomy, they are frightened by the Tamil Nadu Independence Movement. They know through Indian intelligence agencies' assessment that independent Tamil Nadu is not just a daydream of Tamil nationalists but it could become a reality. Though armed Tamil Nadu freedom fighters probably number only in the hundreds (no one except those who belong to these groups may know the full extent of their strength), given time and wider public support, they could quickly become several thousand dedicated fighters. If such groups coordinate

their efforts with freedom fighters in the north and east, Indian army may have a serious problem and the "Indian Union" may start to unravel. That is the importance of Tamil Nadu Freedom Movement, that is the potential of Tamil Nadu Independence Movement, and that is what frightens the Indian government. That was why the Indian government threatened Perunchiththiranar and failing in that, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi personally intervened to "bribe" him to silence. Perunchiththiranar could have asked for and received virtually any personal favor from Rajiv Gandhi. Lucrative government jobs for him and his family members were for his asking. Rajiv Gandhi would have offered Perunchiththiranar a million rupees if he asked for it. (Congress as well as other parties have bribed politicians with large sums of money for crucial political support. So it would be no problem to offer Perunchiththiranar large sums of money to silence him.)

But Perunchiththiranar was a honorable man. He refused even to meet with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The Indian government was at a loss as to what to do with this Perunchiththiranar. Indian government, all the way up to the Prime Minister, would have breathed a collective sigh of relief when Perunchiththiranar passed away at the age of 62 (going on 63) on June 11, 1995. Voice of this great Tamil nationalist leader that could not be silenced by threats from the mighty Indian government or by its offers of bribe finally fell silent.

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13. Perunchiththiranar's Final Days

Perunchiththiranar fell ill in March 1995. For the next three months, until his death, he was in and out of hospitals and doctor's care. Still he went to out of town meetings. Even in his last days his thoughts were of his duty and service to the Tamil people. I have heard people telling doctors, "doctor, please save me, I want to see my youngest daughter's wedding before I die" or "doctor, please save me, I want to see the birth of my grand child", etc. But this great Tamil nationalist leader said to his doctors, "**there is yet 25 years of service left for me to do. I need to live to finish my work. So please take good care of my body**." Did he think that Tamil Nadu would be free in another 25 years? He passed away on June 11, 1995 at about 7:00 AM in Ramachandra Hospital in Chennai.

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14. Karunanidhi's Tribute

DMK President and former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi was in Madurai on June 11 on party business. When he heard of Perunchiththiranar's death he asked his aide to make arrangements for his immediate return to Chennai to pay his last respects. As travel arrangements were being made, further information came that Perunchiththiranar's body will be in refrigeration and will be buried only on June 16 because his third daughter and son in law have to come from America. So Karunanidhi attended to his party business and on his return to Chennai went to the hospital (where Perunchiththiranar's body was kept in refrigeration) to pay his last respect. Later he was also the key speaker at a memorial service. It should be noted that Perunchiththiranar was never a DMK member nor was he a family member or close friend. Only thing that bound Karunanidhi and Perunchiththiranar was their common love for Tamil.

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15. "Who is Who" of Tamil Nadu Politics

Many political and non-political leaders, Tamil scholars and social reformers came to pay their last respects between June 11 and June 16. They included some well-known political leaders of Tamil Nadu at that time:

Karunanidhi, President, DMK
Kumari Anandan, Former President TNCC
Nedumaran, President, TNM
Ramadoss, President, PMK
Vaiko, General Secretary, MDMK
Veeramani, President, DK

These leaders are well known to Tamil people because their names are often in newspapers due to their well- publicized political activities. Many other leaders and scholars whose names are not household words but whose contributions to the Tamil society are equally important also came to pay their last respect. The list of names is very long, so I am not including it in this article.

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16. Tribute from Tamil Organizations

The following Tamil organizations played a key role in organizing the funeral procession and holding many condolence meetings throughout Tamil Nadu. This list shows the respect and affection Perunchiththiranar had from the wide spectrum of Tamil organizations.

Aathi Tamilar Peravai
Ariviyakka Peravai
Dalit Panpaattu Peravai
Dravida Tamilar Kazhagam
Dravidar Kazhagam
Eela Tamilar Paathukappu Kazhagam
Makkal Kalai Ilakkiya Kazhagam
Makkal Kudiyurimai Kazhagam
Maraimalaiyadigal Manram
Marxiya Periyariya Pothuvudamai Katchi
Painthamil Pasarai
Pannattu Tamil Vuravu Mantram
Puratchi Pavalar Peravai
Puratchikara Ilaigar Munnani
Tamil Chantoar Peravai
Tamil Desiya Forward Bloc
Tamil Eela Viduthalai Munnani
Tamil Ina Thondiyakkam
Tamil Ina Viduthai Kazhagam
Tamil Iyakkam
Tamil Nadu Ilaigar Peravai
Tamil Nadu Marxist-Leninist Katchi
Tamil Nadu Parayar Peravai
Tamil Osai
Tamil Thesa Pothuvudamai Katchi
Tamilaga Odukkappattoar Viduthalai Iyakkam
Tamilaga Tamilasiriyar Kazhagam
Tamilar Munnetra Kazhagam
Tamil-Tamilar Iyakkam
Thalai Nagar Tamil Sangam
Thenmoli Payilunar Avai
Viduthalai Chiruththaikal
Vulaga Tamil Ina Munnetra Kazhagam
Vulaga Tamil Kazhagam
Vuzhaikkum Makkal Viduthalai Iyakkam

(NOTE: I prepared the above list from various sources. If any organization is omitted, I am not ignoring them purposively, I just did not know of their participation. Any

organization that works for the welfare of Tamil people is to be respected and recognized even if I do not agree with every one of its policies and objectives.)

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17. Tribute from the Tamil Nadu State Legislative Assembly

Finance Minister of the AIADMK Ministry of Tamil Nadu, Nedunchezhian, moved a message of condolence for Perunchiththiranar and the legislative assembly passed it across party lines. Perunchiththiranar was a harsh critic of Chief Minister Jayalalitha, sometimes in a very personal manner. The fact that she allowed such a condolence message to be moved and passed in the assembly is a mark of graciousness on her part (nothing is done in AIADMK without her consent).

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18. Last Respects from Prabaharan

A senior Congress(I) leader told reporters that, according to intelligence agencies, LTTE leader Prabaharan sent two of his top leaders as his personal emissaries from Jaffna to Chennai clandestinely to pay his last respects to Perunchiththiranar.

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19. The Final March

Perunchiththiranar's funeral was scheduled for June 16, 1995. Tamil organizations posted over 50,000 posters throughout Tamil Nadu informing people of the funeral date. A number of newspapers also published the information.

Perunchiththiranar's body was "placed in state" from 11 AM to 3 PM on June 16 so mourners can see it and pay their respects. The funeral procession started at 3 PM from his home to his final resting place in Medavakkam (suburb of Chennai) some 14 kilometers away (approximately eight-and-a-half miles).

Perunchiththiranar had participated in many marches in service of the Tamil people. This "final march" seems to be the biggest of them all. The procession was about one kilometer long (well over half-a-mile long), and traffic has to be stopped for about an hour and a half on Chennai's main throughway, the Anna Chalai (formerly known as Broadway). The procession was loud and picturesque. People had come from all over Tamil Nadu and some from outside. They shouted slogans all the way. **Slogans (in Tamil) included** "Hero's farewell to Perunchiththiranar" and "We will fulfil the wishes of Tamil Nadu freedom fighter Perunchiththiranar". There were numerous placards displaying slogans and his photographs. It is believed that it is the largest funeral procession in Tamil Nadu for a person who is not a top politician. The size of the procession and the slogans showed the depth of Tamil nationalist feelings in Tamil Nadu. Remember, in a region like Tamil Nadu, coming to Chennai from a village or town 100, 200 or 500 kilometers away by rail or bus (very few have cars) takes time and money. So the number of people who came to the funeral is only the tip of the iceberg.

Perunchiththiranar's body reached his final resting place around 7 PM. It was finally laid to rest at 7:30 PM. Someone said, "We are not burying Perunchiththiranar, we are planting a seed". Perunchiththiranar, in his service to Tamil for almost 40 years, had planted seeds of Tamil nationalism in the hearts and minds of many thousands of Tamils.

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20. A Single Individual can make a Difference, You can too...

Perunchiththiranar's life is an example of how a dedicated individual, with no political support and no financial resource, can change the course of the history of a people single handedly.

Perunchiththiranar started his first magazine Thenmoli in 1959 when he was only 26 and working for the post office. He was by no means a rich man. His father was a police constable. Perunchiththiranar had a dream, a vision, a goal. Hindi domination and rule of his country Tamil Nadu bothered him. He wanted it to be free. He dreamed of an independent Tamil Nadu. He wrote of his dream, his vision, his goal, his thirst for independence in his magazine.

He published it at a loss, spending his own money. The magazine was published at that time from Cuddalore where he worked. Very few knew of him. Very few heard of his magazine. Slowly and steadily the magazine's popularity increased, especially among college students. One student told another, another told another, and so on. Perunchiththiranar became almost a cult figure among some college students.

Some students took it upon themselves to solicit subscriptions for the magazine. One such benefactor was a student at St. John's College in Thiruchi (Trichi), named Saththiah. I believe that he got more subscriptions than anyone else did at that time. He later changed his name to Thamizh Kudimagan. Yes, it is the same Thamizh Kudimagan who is now the Minister of Tamil Development in the present Tamil Nadu state government of Chief Minister Karunanidhi.

Students not only solicited subscriptions but those studying in nearby towns came to Cuddalore to help print, collate and bind the magazine. Students came long distances by bicycle to do voluntary work for the magazine.

Readership increased and the magazine was no longer running at a loss. No, it did not make him rich; magazine's circulation was only a very small fraction of popular entertainment magazines like Kumudam or political magazines like Murasoli. He left his post office job in the late 1960s and devoted his full time to writing. Schools, colleges and Tamil associations around Tamil Nadu invited him to speak at their meetings. The yearning for independence for Tamil Nadu was seeded in thousands of Tamil hearts. He single handedly kept the flames of freedom alive in Tamil Nadu. This one man's work scared the Indian government so much that the Prime Minister of India wanted to meet with him and personally persuade him to drop his demand for independence for Tamil Nadu (see Section 11).

Perunchiththiranar is **an inspiration** to all of us, as to what one ordinary person, with no financial resources or political support can do if he or she set his/her mind to it. Many of us may not make the level of impact he made on Tamil society; it does not matter, even a small impact when multiplied by hundreds and thousands can move a mountain. But each

one of us has to do something to achieve whatever our vision is for Tamil, Tamil Nadu and Tamil people. Let us do what we can.

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